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Medical Work in the Villages of Southern India.

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BY

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"And when He saw the multitude He was moved with compassion."

FOR a week we have been moving from village to village, teaching and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing the sick. We began work on Monday, October 13, in Mr. Perkins' bungalow at Arrupukottai. While I treated the women and children, Miss Perkins told the waiting women of Christ, and Mr. Perkins preached to the men who accompanied them. It was a long, busy day; steady work from eight till seven in the evening, interrupted only by little rests for breakfast and tea, and occasional visits to Mrs. Perkins' room, where she was caring for her sick baby, Kenneth. At half-past eleven Miss Perkins and I and Annal (my medical assistant and Bible woman) arranged ourselves as comfortably as we could in our bullock-bandy for our rough journey. Mr. Perkins waited till morning, that he might bring us the latest report from the baby. The first stage was six miles only, but over a road than which I can think of nothing more uncomfortable.

A guide with lantern led the way, and we went slowly and carefully. Nevertheless, we rolled back and forth and slipped up and down as if on a choppy sea. I do not know what time it was when we reached Karankulam, for we were too sleepy to look at our watches. By six we were established in the little mud and brick

church, and had shut out the gathering crowd long enough to dress. Our tea was taken in the sight of a wondering audience. Mr. Perkins' sciopticon sheet was then stretched across one end of the church to give me a consulting room. While Annal and I laid out the medicines and instruments, Miss Perkins and the catechist, John, received the patients and gave them tracts with their names and villages written on them. If I had been new to the country I should have been frightened, so importunate, noisy and utterly unmanageable were the people. I decided to turn no one away if it could be helped, and from eight in the morning till after eight at night we worked steadily, taking a few moments only to run to the catechist's little mud house, where our food had been laid out on boxes for us. In my end of the church there were three windows, and in front the sheet. You can hardly imagine how annoying the maddening crowd can make itself. Around the sheet and under it, and into the windows, pressed the people, and it was more than Miss Perkins and her brother and the catechist could do to keep even a semblance of order. It was hard to make the high caste people realize that we were no respecters of persons. They persisted in pushing to the front, and in declining to sit next a low caste. Long before night my faithful friend and assistant, Annal, seemed ready to drop from fatigue and want of food. We had to ask the Father more than once in that distracting day to give us of his love and patience — to give us *clear*

minds and a quiet manner. When I looked over my book I found I had examined and treated two hundred and twenty-five people! During the evening Mr. Perkins and his catechist preached, and showed sciopticon pictures to about five hundred people.

Miss Perkins, Annal and I, cleaned up and packed our medicines, and I sent a cooly off to Madura for more medicines. Then, shutting up the church, we took our baths and dressed for the night's journey as best we could, considering that the outside people felt it necessary to push open the blinds every few seconds. By half-past nine we were ready, and I threw myself down in the catechist's house and went to sleep, too tired to be kept awake long by the rustling of a rat or snake in the thatched roof over my head. Mr. Perkins went back to Arrupukottai and we went on to Paraletchy, eleven miles away, after a little excitement in getting rid of a rat which had made its home for the night in our cart.

At Paraletchy we were so quiet and comfortable that it was hard to realize that we were working among the same kind of people which we had seen the day before. The tent was ready for us, and we had only to arrange our cots, chairs, and tables of medicines. It seemed so pleasant to have a home, and a place to bathe and dress (though the people would look in, in the most stolid manner). We began work earlier than on the day before, but the people were so quiet, and listened so respectfully to the preaching — came and went so unobtrusively — that,

although I saw eighty-three before breakfast, I did not feel in the least weary. We took an hour for rest — if one can rest with every window and door filled with a wondering crowd, and with importunate women looking at you appealingly as if they feared they would be forgotten.

The afternoon work was steady and hard, but the people were good-natured, and when we finally shut our doors, at half-past eight, we were neither nervous nor cross. The only annoying thing of the day — and that, I daresay, because we are free-born Americans — was the haughtiness of the high castes, and the humility of the low castes. At noon we noticed that a large company of women had sat from early morning at the back door of our tent, afraid to come to the entrance while the high caste people were coming. In the afternoon I insisted on seeing these people first, rather to the consternation of the aristocrats, who had evidently intended to monopolize the impromptu dispensary. My medicines were so nearly out that I feared another whole day would exhaust them; and as Mr. Perkins, on his arrival at half-past eight with good news from Kenneth, was tired, we decided to spend the night in Paraletchy, and go on to Perenalai early in the morning. After a late dinner Mr. Perkins went to his bullock cart and we to our cots, and slept soundly till morning.

Miss Perkins and I reached Perenalai about nine, but the tent and carts with Mr. Perkins and the Bible women did not come till an hour later. India's sun (Lat. 9°. 5′) is sometimes too

much for me, and I was so faint as I got down from the bandy that I had to sit under a banyan tree to recover, while Miss Perkins entertained the quickly gathered crowd. As the tent was not ready till eleven, we had to hurry our breakfast and make ready for work. How we worked! When nine o'clock came I was, perhaps, more tired than I had ever been in my life, but very happy that God had so directed my life that I could come to the help of these poor neglected women and children. They had never seen a lady doctor in their lives, and their gratitude was refreshing, but, oh, so pitiful! I wish that I might go and live among them. They need me, and what a joyous thing it would be to feel always that one was needed! As we were so nearly out of medicines, we came apart to rest in the wilderness in this quiet spot by the sea. As Annal and I packed up that night, I spoke of the wonder that in such a climate, and with restless nights, we had the strength to do so much. Her sweet answer pleased me, it was so simple. "It's from God. He knows where to give the strength." And the word came to me, "They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength." That night Annal and the Bible woman had a cart to themselves, and Miss Perkins and I were much more comfortable. We struck off across country, straight into the wilderness, where nothing grows but thorn trees and palmyras. Our guide lost his way, and for five hours more than we anticipated we dragged slowly through the sand, till at length, in the heat of the day, we

reached the desired haven of rest. That night we bathed in the sea, and Annal was so impressed as she saw the restless waters that she cried, "I am glad I came to see this before I die!" I dearly love the sea, but I have known it from a child, and did not realize how it would impress one who had never seen it.

ARRUPUKOTTAI, Oct. 23.

At this point I was interrupted by a company of men coming to the tent for a Sunday service with Mr. Perkins. I was interested in watching the faces of these men, who had come through three miles of burning sand, and under blazing skies, to hear Mr. Perkins speak of Christ. They are people with a history. These villages along the seacoast are thoroughly heathen. The people are childishly superstitious and ignorant. I suppose the women had never seen a white woman till Miss Perkins and I came to them. We found one woman with a lizard's tail coiled up in the hole in her ear — a cure for headache; and we saw a number of children with anklets made of their mothers' hair, a mark of distinction to show that the small pox god had spared their lives when they had been attacked. These people came from the village of Sayalgudi, three miles from our camp, and in this village from time to time for two years Mr. Perkins has preached, and the people have been almost persuaded to be Christians. Mr. Perkins could not understand just where the difficulty lay; and yet the wonder is not that the people hesitate to

come over to the Lord's side, but that they ever dare to come out from so mighty a multitude and identify themselves with the handful of the Lord's followers.

Last spring one of our young men lost his wife — one of the victims to La Grippe — and soon after came to Mr. Perkins asking for work as a catechist. Usually — so hard is it to raise money for catechists — a preacher is *not* sent to *reside* in a village until there are Christians there. (If this seems to you a strange thing, see you to it; for it is one of the griefs in the heart of every missionary that there is so little money to meet the calls for *advance* in his work.) Mr. Perkins has no money for a catechist in Sayalgudi; but after thinking it over, he said to the young man: "I have a village by the sea; there are no Christians there, but some have been almost persuaded to come out. It is a bigoted place; you may be persecuted. You may lack the ordinary necessary things of life; you will find *no* comforts. If you care to go there, if you will work faithfully and not come complaining that you are lonely or that you cannot get food — if you care to do this for Christ — I will try to raise the money for your salary." The young man, Solomon, with his motherless children, went to the place, and one of the children died of small pox. Since then he has married again, and life is made more comfortable for them all. He had been there but a short time when word came to Mr. Perkins that *one hundred and thirty-six* were ready to identify themselves with the

Christians. As soon as he could start, Mr. Perkins and his pastors went to see the people. They had built for themselves a little schoolhouse. Mr. Perkins hopes to get money to build them a church, and he thinks a few are already prepared to become communicants. Since then word has come that *forty* in a neighboring village are ready to serve God with the Christians. You have probably not the faintest idea of what it means to be on the Lord's side in this country. They need much encouragement, and they need your prayers and your money. I was interested, as I said, in watching them as the service went on; for however ignorant and uncivilized the people are, a few months of even nominal connection with Christianity works a wonderful change in their faces. It was to us a restful day, for reading and writing, and talks together about the little earthly pilgrimage we were making, its joys and its trials, and more about the trials and joys of the way in our pilgrimage heavenward. In the morning Mr. Perkins had two meetings — one with men who are inquiring the way to Christ, and one with the men and women who, having heard that we had come, brought their sick folk to be healed. Miss Perkins and I, too, at opposite sides of the tent, held meetings with the women, and afterwards, morning and evening, Annal and the Bible woman went out to the villages preaching Christ. In the evening we three went down by the sea and had a little meeting by ourselves, though here, too, we were sought out by those

who asked healing. We saw in the distance ships, and close to us, over the waves, rode two pelicans. The moon was silvering all the waves as we walked slowly back to our tent.

Early Monday morning we moved our tent to Sayalgudi, and there had a quiet, pleasant day. I prescribed for one hundred and twenty-five patients, and Annal had time to preach a little and to visit some of the people in their houses. This is really the Bible woman's work, and she did it daily; but Annal is always glad to proclaim the glad tidings when I can spare her for a time. The little rajah of the village (owner of over seventy villages) came with his guardian to visit us. In the afternoon Mr. Perkins preached in his house, and in the evening showed his sciopticon pictures against the white wall of the house and preached to the people. The great man of the place was supercilious and annoying, scoffing at Christianity and trying to ridicule it, all in a spirit of bluster and bravado; but the poor heard the gospel quietly, and we hope gladly. After the evening meeting we pushed on six miles farther to Taragudi, where many from miles around had gathered to meet us — having heard in some way that we were moving to that place. One Bible verse came to me as so true of our trip: "And at even, when the sun was set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased . . . and all the city was gathered together at the door." All day, and every day, we had a steady stream of those that were blind, palsied, lepers, and those filled with fevers and pains; but

toward night the stream became like a river, and as the poor people came from the fields and places far away, it was sad to me that always some had to be turned away.

We were especially impressed at Taragudi with the attitude of the Mohammedans, always the most difficult for us to influence in any way. Before, when Mr. Perkins had preached there, they had ordered him from their streets. Now, not only did they gladly receive him and hear his words, and those of his pastors, but they listened attentively to everything that Annal and the Bible woman spoke to them. That day we actually saw two hundred and fifty-nine patients, and then had to send others away. The men were so anxious to be treated! but I had so little medicine that I saw only a few extreme cases. I had a feeling of wicked satisfaction that for once (probably for the first time in their lives) the men had to give way to the women. This hasty work is not my ideal work, though it does much good. I should like to camp down in such a place for a month, so that I could learn to know the people personally and visit them in their houses. But even in treating the ten hundred and ninety-six patients that I had seen up to that time, I had to walk by faith rather than sight, for I have no allowance for any of this medicine. We were obliged to come by Kaneathi, with its ten thousand people and many outlying villages, because we had no medicines for the many who would come to us. On Tuesday night, therefore, we came on over a

road, in places, somewhat like a plowed field, for twenty-two miles, to Mandapasalai, to an empty mission bungalow. Then we had the luxury of finding plenty of water for baths; there we found a letter from Mrs. Perkins, calling us home quickly to the baby, and then I had to turn my back on scores of people who had come to me from all directions — and I had nothing to give them! Mr. Perkins, Annal and I started at once for Arrupukottai, and Miss Perkins came on in the evening after spending the day in her Mandapasalai schools. Here the people flock in to consult me, and we have managed, from the fragments that remain, to help a very few. To most I have had to say: "I will come again the last of November. If you cannot wait, come to me in Madura."

Baby Kenneth's case puzzles me. I shall stay over Sunday so as to watch the treatment for a few days. Thus, not altogether as we planned, has ended over ten days' work. It has seemed to me more Christ-like work than any I've tried before, and we have been brought nearer to Him and to each other. The word which has gone with me and strengthens me I give to you for your study and help. We will find it in the last verse in second Corinthians:

The Love of God,
The Grace of Christ,
The Communion of the Holy Ghost.